

Though I really do miss parishioners in the church celebrating the greatest prayer, the Holy Mass, I will not miss the comments this year on Gaudete Sunday, “Gee, Father, you look good in pink.”

On Gaudete Sunday ROSE-coloured vestments may be worn instead of violet. The readings for Gaudete Sunday deal with rejoicing in the Lord – Christian joy – as well as the mission of John the Baptist and his connection with Advent.

The theologian Henri Nouwen described the difference between joy and happiness. He said, while happiness is dependent on external conditions, joy is "the experience of knowing that you are unconditionally loved and that nothing – sickness, failure, emotional distress, oppression, war, or even death - can take that love away." Thus joy can be present even in the midst of sadness—or a pandemic!

The spirit of the liturgy throughout Advent is one of expectation and preparation for the feast of Christmas as well as for the second coming of Christ. Advent is meant to be a “little Lent,” which is a penitential spirit. On Gaudete Sunday the penitential spirit is suspended, as it were, in order to symbolize the joy and gladness that our promised redemption is close at hand.

“Gaudete” means “to rejoice.” And there are many reasons to rejoice and for joy.

There is joy in looking forward to the annual celebration of Christmas. There is also joy in recalling the birth of Jesus on the first Christmas. The joy is heightened because Jesus was born to save us from our sins.

The joy also extends to anticipation of the Second Coming, either at the end of a person’s physical life or the end of the world, the time when believers will be given the crown of righteousness (2 Tm 4:8) and a place in the Father’s house (Jn 14:2) to dwell with God and his angels and saints for all eternity.

Joyful prayers are prayed during Holy Mass. In the opening prayer we hear: “O God, who see how your people faithfully await the feast of the Lord’s Nativity.” Then we ask the Lord: “enable us ... to attain the joys of so great a salvation” and “to celebrate them with ... glad rejoicing.”

Later in the Mass the priest prays: “we rejoice at the mystery of his Nativity” and we are “exultant in his praise.” And, in the final blessing the priest prays: “may he make you ... joyful in hope,” “So that, rejoicing now with devotion at the Redeemer’s coming.”

And, there is a joyful color. It is ROSE, not pink. Rose represents joy. The priest may wear a rose chasuble and the deacon may wear a rose dalmatic. Church decorations may include roses or other flowers, a rose-colored altar cloth, drapery on the pulpit or ambo, chalice veil, tabernacle curtain, or wall hangings. The third candle of the Advent wreath is rose.

I will be wearing ROSE when I celebrate Mass this Sunday. And, I will be remembering all of you. Even though our Christmas celebration will be different this year, Christmas is still what it has always been: JOY TO THE WORLD...The Lord has come.